

## Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 AF-06 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 PC-01 AID-05 /081 W

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R 101703Z SEP 75

FM AMEMBASSY RABAT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6441

INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMCONSUL CASABLANCA

AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

AMCONSUL TANGIER

AMEMBASSY TUNIS

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY MADRID

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 RABAT 4390

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINTO MO

SUBJECT: LOCAL ELECTIONS

REF: RABAT 1129, 2052, 2135, 2290, 3321 (NOTAL)

1. SUMMARY: SIGNS EMERGING OF GOM PLANS TO MOVE AHEAD WITH LOCAL ELECTIONS. NATIONAL ELECTIONS CONTINUE TO BE RULED OUT FOR PRESENT. PARTICIPATION OF OPPOSITION PARTIES UNCLEAR, BUT STRONGER PARTIES UNHAPPY OVER STRICTLY LOCAL ASPECT, WHICH THEY VIEW AS LIKELY TO CONTRIBUTE FURTHER TO EROSION OF TRADITIONAL POLITICAL FORCES. END SUMMARY.

2. SIGNS OF MOVEMENT: A SERIES OF ARTICLES IN PAST TWO WEEKS BY PUBLISHER OF SEMI-OFFICIAL LE MATIN-LE SOIR AND ROYAL CONFIDANT AHMED ALAOUI INDICATES KING HAS APPARENTLY DECIDED TO MOVE FORWARD WITH SOME KIND OF LOCAL ELECTIONS TOWARD END OF THIS YEAR. KING HAD ALL BUT PROMISED THIS IN JULY 8 SPEECH  
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(RABAT 3321), BUT MOROCCO HAS BECOME A NATION OF SKEPTICS AS

REGARDS PREDICTIONS OF ELECTIONS. ON SEP 3, HOWEVER, MINISTRY OF INTERIOR FOLLOWED UP WITH DECREE SETTING FORTH TERMS OF UPDATE OF VOTERS' LISTS FOR EXPRESS PURPOSE OF PREPARING FOR LOCAL ELECTIONS.

3. KING'S JULY 8 SPEECH HAD SEPARATED QUESTION OF LOCAL FROM THAT OF NATIONAL ELECTIONS. REGARDING NATIONAL, HE SAID THEY WOULD BE HELD IN A YEAR OR YEAR AND A HALF "AT MOST." AS FOR LOCAL ELECTIONS -- WHICH HE DESCRIBED AS INVOLVING COMMUNITY, MUNICIPAL, PROVINCIAL, REGIONAL, AND PROFESSIONAL COUNCILS -- HE PROMISED MORE IMMINENT ACTION, INCLUDING FORMATION OF "NATIONAL COMMISSION" REPRESENTING COUNTRY'S POLITICAL FORCES TO STUDY ATTRIBUTES OF COUNCILS TO BE ELECTED.

4. ALAOUI ARTICLES WERE EVEN MORE EXPLICIT IN SEPARATING NATIONAL FROM LOCAL ELECTIONS AND IN PUTTING OFF NATIONAL ELECTIONS. LENGTHY JUSTIFICATIONS FOR STRENGTHENING LOCAL INSTITUTIONS AND DECENTRALIZING AUTHORITY WERE SET FORTH, IN SERIES TITLED "HASSANIAN DEMOCRACY." IN DISCUSSING DECENTRALIZATION, POINT WAS CLEARLY MADE THAT IT ADMINISTRATIVE AUTHORITY, NOT POLITICAL, WHICH MUST BE DECENTRALIZED.

5. VOTER REGISTRATION: MININT DECREE STIPULATED THAT VOTERS' LISTS WILL BE UPDATED ON LOCAL LEVEL BETWEEN SEPT 10 AND OCT 2, AFTER WHICH REGISTRATION WILL CLOSE. MEMBERS OF BOTH SEXES AGED 21 MAY REGISTER. ALAOUI ESTIMATED THAT AS MANY AS FIVE MILLION VOTERS, MAINLY YOUTHS, MIGHT BE ELIGIBLE TO REGISTER. A SEMI-OFFICIAL NEWS AGENCY (MAP) STORY HAS SAID THAT, SINCE UPDATE OCCURRING SO CLOSE TO END OF THE YEAR, NEXT OPPORTUNITY TO REGISTER WILL NOT BE UNTIL BEGINNING OF 1977. (COMMENT: THIS PUTS PRESSURE ON PARTIES TO URGE REGISTRATION OF THEIR FOLLOWERS EVEN IN ABSENCE OF DEFINITE PRIOR INDICATIONS OF WHAT ELECTIONS WILL AMOUNT TO. IT ALSO APPEARS TO EXCLUDE POTENTIAL VOTERS COMING OF AGE AFTER OCT 2 FROM PARTICIPATION INTER ALIA IN ANY 1976 NATIONAL ELECTIONS.)

6. ELECTIONS FOR WHAT? THERE IS NO CLEAR WORD FROM GOVERNMENT AS YET AS TO WHICH LOCAL BODIES WILL BE ELECTED, OR WHEN. ALAOUI, HOWEVER, STATED THAT IN ADDITION TO COMMUNITY AND MUNICIPAL COUNCIL ELECTIONS, POLLING FOR PROVINCIAL AND CONFIDENTIAL

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REGIONAL COUNCILS WOULD BE HELD. (NOTE: REGIONAL BODIES DESCRIBED AS "NEW CONCEPT", BUT 1971 DECREE CREATED SEVEN REGIONS, EACH CONSISTING OF THREE OR MORE PROVINCES. WHILE CONSTITUTION OF 1972 CALLS FOR DIRECT SUFFRAGE FOR COMMUNITY AND MUNICIPAL COUNCILS, PROVINCIAL COUNCILS ARE DESIGNED AS A MIX OF DIRECTLY ELECTED MEMBERS, MUNICIPAL COUNCIL MEMBERS, AND REPRESENTATIVES OF PROFESSIONAL COUNCILS SUCH AS CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, AGRICULTURE, INDUSTRY, ETC. REGIONAL COUNCILS

IN TURN ARE CONSULTATIVE ONLY AND COMPRISED OF PROVINCIAL,  
MUNICIPAL, AND PROFESSIONAL COUNCIL MEMBERS.)

7. WHILE NOT SETTING A SPECIFIC DATE FOR LOCAL ELECTIONS,  
ALAOUI HINTS THAT THEY MAY BE KEYED SOMEHOW TO NOV 18  
CELEBRATION OF 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF RETURN OF MOHAMMED V FROM  
EXILE. ISTIQLAL'S L'OPINION SEPT 9 PRINTED RUMOR THEY  
MAY BE HELD ON JAN 9. AFOREMENTIONED MAP STORY PREDICTED  
THAT PROVINCIAL AND REGIONAL ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS, AS WELL AS  
PROFESSIONAL COUNCIL ELECTIONS, TO BE HELD NEXT JANUARY AND  
FEBRUARY. ASSUMPTION, THEN, IS THAT COMMUNITY/MUNICIPAL  
COUNCIL ELECTIONS ARE PLANNED PRIOR TO THAT SINCE THESE  
BODIES MUST PROVIDE PART OF THE MEMBERSHIP FOR PROVINCIAL  
AND REGIONAL COUNCILS. (IT IS ALSO WORTH NOTING THAT ONE  
THIRD OF MEMBERSHIP OF ANY FUTURE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY WOULD COME  
FROM LOCAL COUNCILS AND REMAINING TWO-THIRDS FROM DIRECT  
VOTING.)  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 RABAT 4390

8. REDEFINING LOCAL AUTHORITY. ALAOUI SERIES PLACES GREAT STRESS ON STRENGTHENING POWERS OF LOCAL BODIES, AND MENTIONS THAT NEW DEFINITION OF ATTRIBUTES WILL BE REVIEWED BY THE AS YET UNNAMED NATIONAL COMMISSION PROMISED BY KING JULY 8. IT IS PRESUMABLY WITHIN FRAMEWORK OF THIS COMMISSION THAT POLITICAL PARTIES WILL BE INITIALLY INVITED TO PARTICIPATE IN ELECTORAL PROCESS.

9. COMMENT: SPECIFICS OF GOM'S PLANNING WILL HAVE TO EMERGE SOON IF ELECTORAL PREPARATIONS ARE IN FACT TO BE COMPLETED BY END OF YEAR. MEANWHILE, KING'S METHOD OF APPROACHING PROBLEM SUGGESTS HE IS CONFIDENT OF OPPOSITION'S WEAKNESS AND MANIPULABILITY. OUR RECENT CONTACTS WITH PARTIES HAVE UNEARTHED NO SIGN KING HAS CONSULTED MAJOR OPPOSITION LEADERS ON ELECTION PLANS, THERE HAVING APPARENTLY BEEN NO DIALOGUE WITH PARTIES EVEN ON SAHARA ISSUE SINCE BEFORE JULY 8 SPEECH. KING'S FOCUS ON LOCAL ELECTIONS CAN BE EXPECTED TO CONTINUE PROCESS OF EROSION OF NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONAL STRENGTH OF  
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OPPOSITION PARTIES, WHICH STRESS NATIONAL ISSUES. ONE SOURCE CLAIMING TIES TO ROYAL FAMILY HAS TOLD EMBOFF THAT KING SO CONVINCED OF IMPOTENCY AND FRAGMENTATION OF PARTIES THAT LOCAL ELECTIONS LIABLE TO RUN RELATIVELY FREE OF GOVERNMENT INTERFERENCE. KING IN SUM STICKING TO GAME PLAN HE HAS DESCRIBED TO AMBASSADOR (RABAT 2135) AND IN PUBLIC REMARKS (RABAT 2052), WITH OUTFLANKING AND DEMORALIZATION OF OPPOSITION PARTIES PRESUMABLY A TACIT AIM.

10. REACTION OF ISTIQLAL AND USFP, STRONGEST OPPOSITION PARTIES, TO EMERGING ELECTORAL PLANS PREDICTABLY HOSTILE, BUT STOPS SHORT OF OUTRIGHT REJECTION. IN BOTH PRESS ORGANS AND TALKS WITH EMBOFFS, THEY HAVE CHARACTERIZED LOCAL ELECTIONS IN SUCH TERMS AS "PALACE MANEUVERS", "INSEPARABLE" FROM DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL ELECTIONS, "MEANINGLESS". OPPOSITION SKEPTICS POINT OUT PRIVATELY THAT KING HAS MADE REPEATED COMMITMENTS TO HOLD NEW ELECTIONS ONLY TO RENEGE, MOST RECENT EXAMPLE BEING HIS MARCH 3 SPEECH (RABAT 1129), IN WHICH HE DECREED THAT PREVIOUS PROMISES FOR 1975 NATIONAL ELECTIONS MUST AWAIT RESOLUTION OF NATION'S ALL-ABSORBING STRUGGLE FOR SAHARA. SKEPTICS ALSO NOTE THAT, FROM LAST LOCAL ELECTIONS HELD IN 1969, REMAINING COUNCILS STILL FUNCTIONING HAVE IN PRACTICE EXERCISED VIRTUALLY NO AUTHORITY. NEVERTHELESS, UPDATING OF ELECTORAL LISTS IN FACT MEETS A MAJOR PRECONDITION OF THE PARTIES FOR PARTICIPATION IN ELECTIONS, ALTHOUGH USFP IS ALSO PARTICULARLY INTERESTED IN A COMMITMENT REGARDING RELEASE OF POLITICAL DETAINEES BEFORE GETTING ON BANDWAGON. PPS (COMMUNIST), ON OTHER HAND, WHICH WORKING FROM WEAK ELECTORATE POSITION, HAS CALLED FOR RESOLUTION OF SAHARA BEFORE ANY ELECTIONS HELD, URGING GOM

TO SCHEDULE BOTH LOCAL AND NATIONAL ELECTIONS DURING 1976.

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